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Fantagraphics Books

Fred the Clown

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The signature creation of New Zealand cartoonist Roger Langridge, *Fred the Clown* is the thinking man's idiot. Fred has an eye for the ladies, as well as several other organs, but the only part of themselves they're willing to share with him is a carefully placed kneecap...

Fred the Clown's misadventures are a curious balance of bleakness and joyful absurdism; the universe may dump on Fred from a great height, but he never gives up. More often than not, they involve the pursuit of a lady — any lady will do, it seems, but bearded ladies are at the top of the list. Disappointment seems inevitable, and it usually is; yet, almost despite himself, Langridge will occasionally give Fred a happy ending out of nowhere...

Langridge's comics betray a restless stylistic playfulness, a pessimism about human nature, and an absurdist perspective on human folly that can be traced back through *Monty Python*, *The Goon Show* and even as far back as Lewis Carroll. *Fred the Clown's* visual look often harks back to earlier eras, evoking the styles of (among others) Max Fleischer cartoons, classic newspaper strips, 19th-century illustration, the children's books of Maurice Sendak and Dr. Seuss, and more. The sensibility, though, is thoroughly modern — no classic style goes unsubverted, no narrative is left without ending in emotional ambiguity or a pomposity-puncturing ironic gag. Underlying it all is Langridge's own meticulous brush style. According to another New Zealand cartoonist, *Hicksville* creator Dylan Horrocks, "If Samuel Beckett had teamed up with the Goons and learned to draw like Tex Avery, the result would have been something very like the comics of Roger Langridge."

#53, Top 100 of the 00s, *Comixdom*

"Langridge's uncanny mimicry of the likes of Winsor McCay, Charles Schulz, Dr. Seuss, and R. Crumb ambitiously positions his lumpen jester as a product of the same inkwell as the industry's giants..." — *The Onion*

"Every so often, lightning strikes — and nails Fred the Clown right in the tokhes. Such is the essence of Langridge's sublimely feckless creation that it's a wonder a bolt ever strikes elsewhere. And such is the comics-steeped virtuosity of Langridge's art — which, while most indebted to Max Fleisher's animated

cartoons (e.g., *Betty Boop*), embraces spot-on parodies of comic strips (*Peanuts*, *Garfield*, etc.), underground cartoonists (Crumb, Deitch), and picture-book artists (Seuss, Gorey) — that the lightning of gratified recognition must repeatedly strike deep-dyed comics lovers while perusing Fred's adventures." – Booklist

Details for this: Book

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